

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief John R. Batiste



Office of the State Fire Marshal State Fire Marshal Michael Matlick

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Electrical Fire Safety - Fire Prevention Week 2008

Electricity has become one of our basic needs and the Office of the State Fire Marshal is encouraging you to get grounded in the basics of electrical safety.

Fire departments in Washington reported that electrical fires were involved in nearly 200 home fires in 2007. These fires resulted in 6 civilian deaths and nearly \$130,000 million in direct property damage.

"The best way to keep the home safe from electrical hazards is to take good care of appliances and to use all electrical equipment properly," said State Fire Marshal Michael Matlick. "Respect for electricity and the power it provides must occur every day throughout the year."

By reviewing the electrical safety tips below and taking action, Washington residents can help reduce electrical fires throughout the state.

- If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips, find out why and correct the problem. Replace fuses with the correct amp rating for the circuit they protect; never replace a fuse with a higher rated fuse. If the problem continues, call an electrician.
- Only plug one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster, space heater, etc.) into a receptacle outlet at a time. Avoid overloading outlets. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet. If an appliance is malfunctioning, unplug it if it is safe to do so, or turn off the circuit breaker. Buy only appliances that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.

- Replace cracked and damaged electrical cords. Avoid pinching cords against walls or furniture or running them under carpets or across doorways. This can cause a fire.
- Use extension cords for temporary wiring only. If needed, consider having additional circuits or receptacles added by a qualified electrician.
- Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) are a new kind of circuit breaker that shut off electricity when a dangerous condition occurs. Consider having them installed in your home by a qualified electrician. Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to reduce the risk of shock. GFCIs shut off an electrical circuit when it becomes a shock hazard. Test AFCIs and GFCIs once a month to make sure they are working properly.
- Keep ladders away from overhead power lines including the electrical service into your home. Never touch a power line. Stay at a safe distance – you could be electrocuted. Report downed power lines to authorities. Some power lines are underground. Call your local authority regarding digging.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data

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PREVENT FIRES
IT'S YOUR JOB!